

I am writing to express the importance of the funding that supports our citizens with disabilities.

I am a mother of a 24 year old young man, named Aitan. Aitan is a humorous, charming, sensitive, helpful young man. Aitan is also a loving big brother, a patient and kind cousin, a cherished grandson and a loyal friend. Aitan skis with Special Olympics. He rides horses with a therapeutic riding class. He works part time at two different restaurants, and one supermarket, besides volunteering to read to a kindergarten class once a week, his favorite childhood books.

Aitan has been diagnosed with ID, Autism, Schizophrenia, Tourette's and Sensory Integration Disorder.

However, with the support of residential and vocational services from Ability Beyond, Aitan has been able to move out of my home, live in his own apartment and blossom into the productive, young man that he is today. Staff from Ability Beyond help Aitan organize himself, create a routine, teach him to cook, clean, and take care of himself. They provide transportation for him to work, to doctor appointments and to the supermarket. Ability Beyond has taught him about managing his finances, and taking his medication.

With the support Aitan has gotten, it has given him the confidence and skills he needed to live his life proudly and independently to the best of his ability.

Aitan is not only is GETTING financial support in the form of services, he is also GIVING back to his community. He is teaching people tolerance, by being a living example that he can enrich the lives of others.

Aitan has a sense of pride because he feels productive, which is what we all need to feel. Without financial support for the services he receives, my fear is that he would not be able to work, to volunteer, to continue to learn the skills necessary to care for himself. Although I am his mother, there are certain things he cannot get from me. It has taken a village to raise him for which I am thankful. I am able to be his mother, not his caretaker, because his daily care is something he manages without my direct support.

Please continue to find the value in supporting our citizens with disabilities live independent lives, by supporting them with the funding needed for their services.

Thank you for your attention,

Jill Chaus